United Nations E/2005/NGO/10

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
24 May 2005

Original: English

Substantive session of 2005
New York, 29 June-27 July 2005
Item 2 of the provisional agenda*
Achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, as well as implementing the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits: progress made, challenges and opportunities

Statement submitted by Mediterranean Council for Burns and Fire Disasters, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2005/100.

05-36051 (E) 090605

From rhetoric to action: building early intervention

Implementing MDGs at the local level

For immigrant women, the complexity of gender-based violence is heightened by the inclusion of factors such as race, ethnicity, educational attainment, patterns of child-rearing, perceptions and attitudes towards the foreign born. With limited educational attainment, if not illiterate, unfamiliar with their rights and existing laws, immigrant women are most vulnerable to discrimination, exploitation and abuse. Their possible undocumented status leads to low-paying jobs, with no social benefits and lack of access to resources.

Under this circumstance, when abused, they fall deep into the manipulations of the abuser who often utilizes their immigration status as an instrument of intimidation, isolation and coercion, threatening to report them to authorities, or have them deported and separated from their children.

Our failure to acknowledge such a reality carries with it the potential of implementing policies and services that are unsuccessful in effectively assisting immigrant women in overcoming the cycle of personal abuse. Furthermore, it derides the advances gained for non-immigrant women.

Moving from rhetoric to action involves many issues, from continuous research and building stronger partnerships to instilling a sense of ownership and social responsibility in a greater number of individuals, in particular health professionals.

The world we envision as being free of violence for all women requires early interventions at all levels. At the initial stages of their education and training, health professionals, particularly physicians, must learn about gender perspectives and the implications of those perspectives in their future practices, and should be trained in the proper identification, assessment, treatment, evaluation and referral of abused women. The earlier medical students are immersed in the problem of the abuse of women, the better our chances of having socially aware and competent health-care providers working to eradicate gender-based violence.

In implementing the Millennium Development Goals, mainly #3 and #8, at the local level, we suggest:

- Providing medical schools with technical assistance to develop gender-oriented curricula and domestic violence differential diagnosis training.
- Working with Governments to establish a mechanism of training health-care providers who work in private practices or networks. This group probably carries a huge bulk of data not reported.
- Promoting partnerships between health professionals and communities through forums and conferences.
- Fostering implementation of mandatory reporting of intimate partner abuse. In the United States of America only six states carry specific laws on reporting suspected cases of domestic violence: California, Colorado, Kentucky, New Hampshire, New Mexico and Rhode Island.

- Allocating funding and technical support to research and programmes that focus on immigrant populations and gender-based violence.

- Establishing surveillance systems as measurable indicators for performance.

Migration can give a woman the opportunity for empowerment, growth, the enjoyment of peace, security and full exercise of her human rights and freedoms. Migration can also constitute the beginning of a cycle of discrimination, exploitation and violence. Governments and civil society have to choose.